

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Friends of the Library are groups of citizens who join together to support, improve, and promote libraries. They understand the importance of library service to the community and work in a variety of ways to help provide high-quality service and to stimulate the use of the library.

Friends have no vested interest in the library and are in the unique position of being able to make enormous contributions in several areas: fund-raising, services, public relations, advocacy, volunteerism, and community involvement. Their activities change as needs change. Friends usually select a limited number of activities to emphasize.

The roles of trustees, library director, and Friends are related but distinct. Trustees represent citizen control and governance of the library. The library director represents the administration and management of the library. Friends of the Library represent citizen participation and assistance to the library. It is highly important to the success of the total library program that all three clearly understand their respective roles and work together toward common goals.

Working With Friends

Trustees should assist the Friends organization and support its activities by providing leadership in the following ways:

- Develop a policy on Friends
- Become a member and attend Friends special events
- Appoint a liaison with the Friends
- Ask for input from the Friends
- Express appreciation to Friends for their support and service

A good relationship between the library director and the Friends group is essential in fostering a climate for joint accomplishments. Each must have a basic understanding of their goals and objectives, a recognition of the strengths that each brings to a common purpose, and the realization that through cooperation they can achieve ultimate success.

What Are Friends For

The purposes of organizing a Friends organization vary depending on group interest and community needs. Friends are usually organized with one or more of the following objectives:

- To increase community awareness and use of the library
- To work for library legislation or appropriations
- To encourage gifts, endowments, and memorials for the library
- To provide direct financial assistance
- To raise money and campaign for a new building, renovation, or expansion
- To sponsor programs designed to add to the cultural life of the community
- To volunteer work in the library on specific projects designated by the director

Friends can be most effective by:

- Adopting bylaws, including a clear statement of the Friends' roles
- Keeping informed of library plans and policies
- Planning their activities with the approval of the library director
- Carrying out projects without excessive demands on the library staff

Friends of Virginia Libraries

A statewide Friends group was formed in 1993. This group publishes a quarterly newsletter that enhances communications between local Friends groups, provides annual awards to outstanding local Friends groups, and provides financial assistance in the formation of new Friends groups. Friends of Virginia Libraries may be contacted through the Public Library Consultant of the Library Development and Networking Division of the Library of Virginia.

(Phone: [804] 692-3763)

Need help in organizing or revitalizing a Friends group?

The Library Development and Networking Services Division of the Library of Virginia can provide assistance in getting a Friends group organized and in maintaining an active program. Consultative service, books, videotapes, audiotapes, lists of other Friends groups, and a variety of brochures and newsletters are available on request.

Does your library have a Friends group?

Does the board have a policy on the Friends group?